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THE WISCONSIN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM AS PERCEIVED BY THE GENERAL PUBLIC, TEACHERS, LEA ADMINISTRATORS, PRINCIPALS, AND SCHOOL BOARD PRESIDENTS[1]

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NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

During the spring of 1977 three statewide surveys were conducted by Wisconsin DPI staff. Survey contents and respondents were entirely different in each. About 450 Wisconsin citizens over age 18 were polled via telephone on items related to school costs, educational goals, DPI functions, and some legal issues. Teachers and administrators from 190 of Wisconsin's 436 LEAs were surveyed via two separate mailed questionnaires. The teacher survey dealt with a variety of services, conditions, materials, etc., that are needed in order to do a satisfactory job in teaching children. The administrator survey dealt with over 50 different activities and services performed by the DPI vis-a-vis LEAs. The teachers and administrators were asked to indicate how important each item was and how well it had been provided. Response rates, after follow-ups, were about 75% except for school board presidents. Methods, results and attempts to get the results used by DPI administrators are discussed.

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[1] A paper given at the American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting March 27, 1978, Toronto.

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EA 010 604

During the fall of 1976 the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) decided to conduct a statewide study of educational needs as they related to the mission of the DPI. The study was developed with several purposes in mind:

a) To provide information to the DPI as it formulates policies, selects priorities, and allocates fiscal resources in state and federal program areas.

b) To gather information regarding the satisfaction of local school districts and regional Cooperative Educational Service Agencies (CESAs) with the DPI's various activities and services.

c) To identify new or unmet needs at the local or CESA level.

d) To provide information to help people in the DPI, CESAs and local districts establish priorities, write federal proposals and initiate programs.

This study acquired the title Statewide Assessment of Educational Needs with the acronym SWAN.

The only general statewide assessment of educational needs done in Wisconsin prior to the SWAN study was conducted in 1969.[2] That study asked various respondents the same 100 questions about educational needs in the following areas: subject field, level of education, vocational-technical programs, teacher personnel, administrative services, pupil services, budget allocations, instructional approaches, educational programs and inservice education. A sample of forty districts was used in the 1969 study, and selected citizens, educators and students were the respondents.

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[2]James M. Lipham, Russell T. Gregg, Donald N. McIsaac and Richard G. Morrow, Wisconsin Educational Needs Assessment Study (Madison: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 1969).

The SWAN study included four independent but complementary components. The first component was an analysis of 47 previously conducted local district needs studies in which DPI consultants had been involved. These districts' reports were analyzed and a sample of the planners and participants in each of these districts was sent a follow-up questionnaire to determine what effect their needs study had, what approaches yielded the best results, etc.

The second SWAN component gathered and summarized descriptions of statewide needs assessment activities that had been conducted by other state educational agencies (SEAs) in the midwest. Written reports from these SEAs were obtained and analyzed, and selective follow-up phone interviews were conducted to gather or clarify information. The primary intent of this component was to provide information comparable to the Wisconsin experience for use by other evaluators in planning any future efforts. Some procedures and instruments which were described in those written reports were also adapted for use in the SWAN study.

The third component was the major thrust of the SWAN study, and it the subject for this presentation. This component was a package of three separate statewide surveys of educational needs and issues in Wisconsin. These surveys were individually designed for different respondent groups and had virtually no common elements or items. All three were administered by the Wisconsin Survey Research Laboratory, University of Wisconsin-Extension (WSRL). The surveys were as follows:

a) Citizen Survey. A telephone survey of public opinion on the relative importance of various Wisconsin DPI responsibilities, selected educational issues, the acceptability of various methods local districts might use to reduce operating costs, and the importance and relative emphasis schools should place on various educational goals.

b) Teacher Survey. A written survey of elementary and secondary teachers to determine their needs for various supportive services usually provided by local school districts, such as teaching conditions, materials, policies, special services, etc.

c) Administrator Survey. A written survey to examine the importance and adequacy of Wisconsin DPI services and activities as perceived by local district administrators, school board presidents, elementary and secondary principals, and the coordinators of Wisconsin's nineteen Cooperative Educational Service Agencies (CESAs).

The fourth component was an evaluation or management analysis of DPI's functioning by a private consulting firm. Data from the surveys of the third SWAN component were used by this consulting firm in its study which analyzed and described the balance between the lawful responsibilities imposed on the Wisconsin DPI at both the state and federal levels, local district service needs, and the programmatic services and activities currently being carried out by the DPI. This component's purpose was to provide top-level DPI administrators with answers to such questions as "Is the DPI meeting its program requirements as determined by lawful mandates and local needs?" and "What are the areas of compliance, noncompliance, duplication, overlap, conflicting requirements, etc.?"

This paper will describe the methods employed for each of the surveys in the third component, and briefly touch upon some of the more interesting and salient findings.

Public Opinion Poll

The Wisconsin DPI had conducted a survey of public opinions about selected educational issues during the previous year.[3] However, that survey had been designed to cover a broad range of topics without going into details about any one of them. It had been designed to probe opinions, rather than to assist in reviewing state-level priorities.

After considering the types of information that might be useful for reviewing state-level goals, policies and priorities, it was decided that three topics would be explored in detail in the SWAN public opinion poll: the perceived importance of various DPI roles and responsibilities, the degree of public acceptance of various methods by which local districts might reduce operating costs, and the importance and amount of school emphasis needed on various educational goals. In addition, a few general education-related issues which had not been included in the 1976 survey of public opinion were included, as well as respondent background and demographic information questions.

Items for the four general topic areas of the opinion poll were developed and tried out on other DPI employees. The interview schedule was designed to require less than 20 minutes for most interview situations. Wisconsin Survey Research Laboratory (WSRL) was contracted to do all the

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[3] Francis B. Evans, Public Opinions About Education: A Statewide Poll of Wisconsin Residents (Madison: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 1976).

telephone surveys and they tried out the interview schedule with about 15 randomly chosen respondents. A number of changes were made on the basis of these field trials. The section on educational goals, in particular, underwent considerable revision.

Respondents were selected by means of a random dialing technique designed and implemented by WSRL. The process involved generating a pre-determined number of four-digit random numbers for each of the telephone prefixes (the first three digits after the area code) used in Wisconsin, screening the numbers to eliminate any that had been used in previous surveys within the past two years, and then ascertaining which numbers were working numbers. Working numbers were called by trained interviewers, and if they were residential numbers, one of the residents was selected for interviewing by a predefined selection process that insured proper representativeness by age and sex. If the selected person was not available at that time, the interviewer made several callbacks at different times of day until the person was interviewed or refused to participate.

Completed interviews were obtained from about 79 percent of the identified residence numbers. About three-fifths of the non-responses were actual refusals by those individuals who were contacted personally. The rest were numbers which never answered.

Four hundred-forty-four completed interviews were obtained for this opinion survey. A conservative estimate of the precision of this size sample obtained in this manner is that ninety-five percent of the time projections to the state population will not be in error by more than $\pm$ 5.3%.

Comparisons of responses to the background and demographic questions with known census data verified the representativeness of the obtained sample.

The first section of the questionnaire asked the respondent to judge the importance of each of nine general DPI responsibilities. Here is the introductory statement and first item as heard by the respondent.

"The Wisconsin State Department of Public Instruction has many responsibilities or activities related to local schools in Wisconsin. I will describe some of these and ask you to tell me if you think each one is of very high importance, high, medium, low, or very low importance.

First---

The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction--or DPI--establishes and enforces minimum standards of classroom instruction and course content for all public schools. What is the importance of this activity?" (The interviewer reminded the respondent of the choices as necessary.)

Responses to this item were:

Very High	32%
High	34
Medium	22
Low	4
Very Low	0
Don't Know	7
Not Ascertained	a
	99%*

a Less than 1/2%

* Does not equal 100% due to rounding

The nine items were ranked according to the percent of respondents who judged the activity to be of high or very high importance. (This particular item, with a combined percent of 66, ranked fourth among the nine.) The range for the nine items was from 89% to 56%, indicating strong public support for these general DPI responsibilities and activities.

The second interview section dealt with general education-related issues - An example of a general interest item is:

"Would you favor or oppose a requirement that students pass a test assuring they have certain knowledge and skills before they are granted a high school diploma?"

The results:

Favor	81%
Oppose	15
Depends	3
Don't Know	1
Not Ascertained	a
	100%

a Less than 1/2%

It should be noted that the respondents were told no details as to what this test would cover and how students who didn't pass would be dealt with. The question of whether the content and proficiency levels for this test would be uniform statewide or locally determined was not raised, either. The inclusion of such information could well shift the responses of a significant number of respondents.

However, public opinion on this topic in Wisconsin appears to parallel opinion nationwide. The Eighth Annual Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools reported that 65% of their respondents favored the requirement that a standard nationwide examination be passed by students before a high school diploma is granted.[4]

The third section of the interview sought the respondent's degree of approval or disapproval of various methods school districts might use to reduce operating costs.

The introductory statement and first item were:

"Wisconsin's school districts have a number of financial problems these days because of inflationary costs and declining enrollments. There are some ways where schools might cut their costs. I will read you a list of eleven things school districts might consider to cut costs. For each one, please tell me if you strongly approve of it, approve, are undecided, disapprove, or strongly disapprove of it.

First--

Schools could reduce the number of teachers, although this could increase the average number of students each teacher would have to teach. How much do you approve or disapprove of this?"

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[4]"Eighth Annual Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools," Phi Delta Kappan, October, 1976, pp. 187-200.

Responses:

Strongly Approve	4%
Approve	21
Undecided	8
Disapprove	45
Strongly Disapprove	19
Don't Know	3
Not Ascertained	a
	100%

a Less than 1/2 %

The eleven items in this section were ranked on the basis of the percent of respondents who approved or strongly approved of each action. (This item ranked eighth out of eleven, indicating teacher reductions would be much less popular than at least seven of the options.) The most acceptable item was to "close down buildings which have low attendance and move the students and teachers to other buildings," with 75 percent of the respondents approving or strongly approving of this action. The least acceptable action was to "reduce the amount of money spent in the basic instructional areas of reading, writing and math," with 14 percent approving or strongly approving.

The last section of the interview provided the respondent with 18 general educational goal statements and asked them, first, how important each was, and, second, how much emphasis schools should place on each goal. The goals were derived from a more general set of eleven educational goals that had been developed by an advisory citizen task force appointed by the Superintendent of Public Instruction in 1972.

The introductory statement and first item were:

"Wisconsin's public school students learn many skills and develop many attitudes and values during their years of formal education. Some of these things are learned in school and some outside of school. I'll read a description of a number of skills, attitudes, and values which students may have mastered by the time they graduate from high school. For each one, please tell me if you feel its importance is very high, high, medium, low or very low. Then I'll ask you whether school emphasis on each should be much more, more, remain the same or be less.

"Students should have high personal moral standards. How important is this...very high, high, medium, low, or very low?"

"Should school emphasis on this be much more, more, remain the same, or be less?"

Responses for this item were as follows:

IMPORTANCE		EMPHASIS	
Very High	66%	Much More	31%
High	24	More	46
Medium	7	Remain the Same	18
Low	1	Less	2
Very Low	1	Don't Know	3
Don't Know	1	Not Ascertained	1
Not Ascertained	a		101%*
	100%	*Not 100% due to Rounding	

a Less than 1/2%

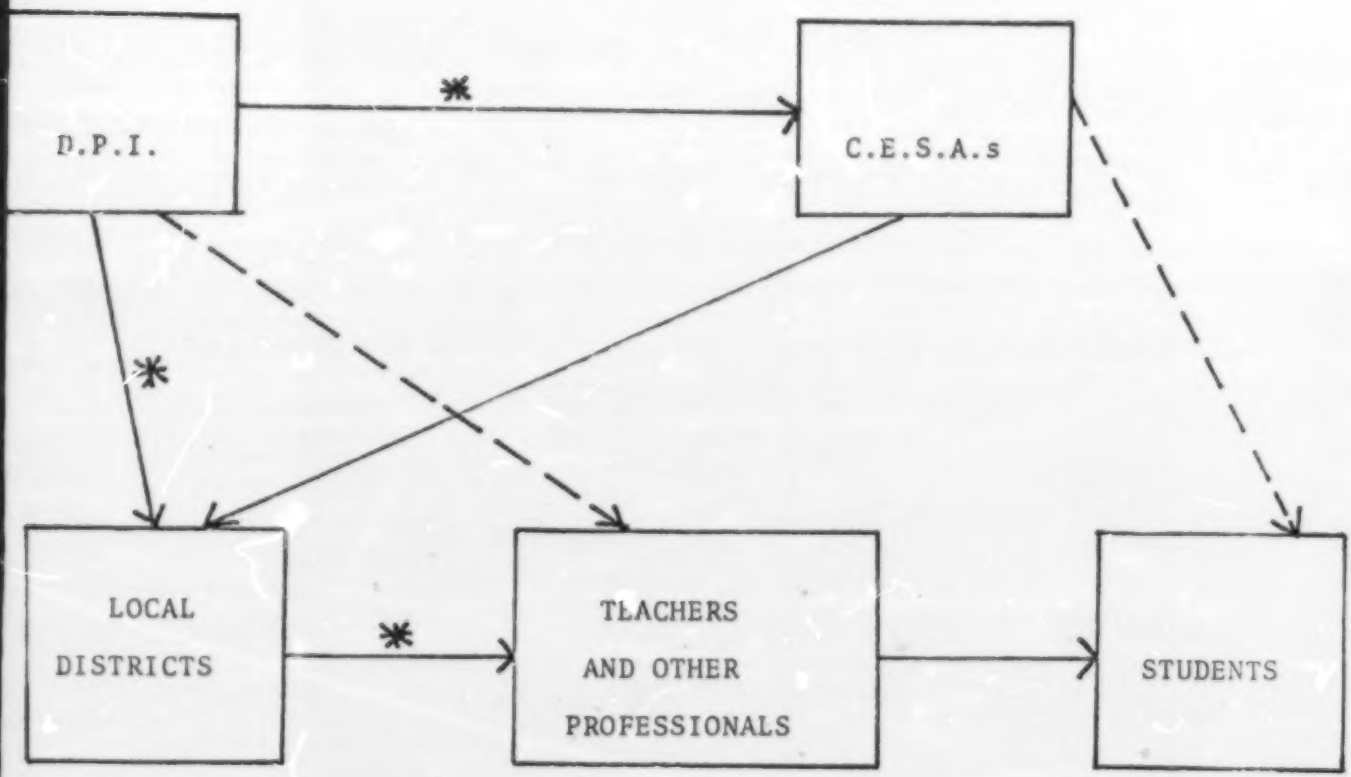
The eighteen items were ranked separately on the basis of the percent of respondents who rated each item as of high or very high importance and the percent of respondents who thought the school emphasis on that item should be more or much more. The top ranked item both on importance and emphasis was to "be able to accept responsibility" with 97 percent judging this as of high or very high importance and 83 percent wanting more or much more emphasis on it in school. The lowest ranked item was to "enjoy and have some understanding of art, music, dance, literature, crafts, and so forth which are part of our cultural heritage," with 68 percent judging this of high or very high importance and 39 percent wanting more or much more emphasis.

Thus, all of Wisconsin educational goals received strong public support. The results are especially encouraging when one notes that only one-third of the respondents had school age children.

Readers interested in a more complete report of the findings of this citizens survey can request the technical report (in preparation) from the authors.

Conceptual Model for Teacher and Administrator Surveys

Viewed from the state level, the educational system can be viewed conceptually as a delivery system. Figure 1 displays the features of this delivery system which are important to the sampling and questionnaire design for the two surveys. The students are considered to be the recipient of the services and activities of teachers and other professionals. The arrow between the teachers and the students indicates this delivery linkage.



* = Examined in SWAN Surveys

Figure 1: DELIVERY-SYSTEM MODEL OF THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

Notice that the students, in a smaller way, are also the recipients of services and activities from the regional-level Cooperative Educational Service Agency (CESA).

In order that they can provide these education-related activities, teachers and other professionals must receive certain things from the local school district. Physical facilities, materials, proper schedule, administrative support, etc., are all things the teachers may need to function properly. The delivery of these necessary things by the district to the teachers was the link in the delivery system that was examined in the SWAN teacher survey. Note also that to a lesser degree there are some things provided to the teachers by the CESA and the Wisconsin DPI. The links between the DPI and the teachers and between the CESAs and the teachers were not examined.

Backing up one step further in this delivery-system model, we see that the local school districts, themselves, receive services from the CESA and the Wisconsin DPI. These include state and federal funds, consultants in subject matter areas, administrative and fiscal consulting, enforcement of state and federal laws, etc. CESAs also receive direct services and activities from the Wisconsin DPI. These two direct linkages with the DPI were examined in the SWAN administrator surveys.

Sampling

It was determined that it would be necessary to draw a sample of 190 LEAs from the 436 in Wisconsin. The sampling of LEAs was complicated by the fact that, in Wisconsin, student enrollments range from 109,151 (Milwaukee) to 66

(Norris Foundation, with 12 elementary and 54 secondary students)! We wanted to be sure to include the five largest districts, since their enrollments account for about 23% of all Wisconsin public school students, so these five districts were taken as an intact stratum without sampling. For sampling purposes the remaining 431 districts were stratified on the basis of enrollment and approximately 3 were sampled from each of 61 strata, resulting in the selection of 185 smaller LEAs. (This was done only to insure proper representation of districts of all sizes. No analyses were performed on the basis of this stratification.)

For all 190 districts selected in this way, the school board president and the district administrator were sent an administrator survey. However, the sampling processes for principals and teachers in the five largest districts were different from the corresponding sampling in the 185 districts of smaller enrollments. Within each of the five largest districts, a number of elementary and of secondary schools, proportional to the total number of such schools in the district, were selected by a random process.* For each of the 185 smaller districts, only one elementary and one secondary school were selected at random.

For each of the elementary and secondary schools thus identified, an administrator survey was sent to the building principal and teacher surveys were sent to two teachers who had been randomly selected from that school building's fall 1976 personnel roster.

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*(Incidentally, junior high and middle schools were both classified as Secondary for this study.)

For samples of these sizes, drawn in this manner, the precision is such that ninety-five percent of the time projections of sample percentages to the various populations will have the following limits: district administrators ± 5.6%, elementary principals ± 6.1%, secondary principals ± 5.2%, elementary teachers ± 5.0%, and secondary teachers ± 5.2%.

An administrator questionnaire was also sent to each of the coordinators of each of Wisconsin's 19 regional Cooperative Educational Service Agencies, with directions that they respond to it from an overall CESA viewpoint.

The sampling, mailing and followups were done by the Wisconsin Survey Research Laboratory. The return rates, after 2 followups, were: District Administrators 82%, Principals 77%, Teachers 76%, School Board Presidents 42%, and CESA Coordinators 95%.

Teacher Survey

The teacher questionnaire was developed around a discrepancy model. Teachers rated the importance of selected services, materials, conditions, etc. provided by their local districts on a five point scale. They then rated on a five point scale how effectively the item was being provided by their district. The gap or discrepancy between importance an effectiveness of provision was interpreted as a measure of need. Figure 2 displays the first page of the teacher questionnaire. There were a total of 48 items in six sections covering: Administrative services; Facilities, equipment, materials, etc.; Teacher training and inservice; Personnel and legal issues; Technical and support services; and Cooperation and communication issues.

Figure 2: FIRST PAGE OF TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE

STATE WIDE ASSESSMENT OF EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

In the following statements of services, conditions, materials, procedures, policies, etc., indicate first how IMPORTANT each item is in enabling teachers and other staff members to do their jobs effectively. Encircle the appropriate number at the left. Then rate the EFFECTIVENESS with which your district has provided the services etc., by encircling the appropriate number at the right.

IMPORTANCE						EFFECTIVENESS					
Very Low	Low	Med.	High	Very High		Very Low	Low	Med.	High	Very High	
					I. ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES						
1	2	3	4	5	A. Leadership, direction, support, unification of effort, and initiative in new programs.	1	2	3	4	5	
1	2	3	4	5	B. Supervision and evaluation of instruction with prompt feedback.	1	2	3	4	5	
1	2	3	4	5	C. Consultation about instructional methods and techniques.	1	2	3	4	5	
1	2	3	4	5	D. Careful planning of the annual calendar and of the school's daily schedule.	1	2	3	4	5	
1	2	3	4	5	E. Well planned assignment of staff members to different jobs and tasks.	1	2	3	4	5	
1	2	3	4	5	F. Involvement of teachers and other staff in policy development and revision.	1	2	3	4	5	
1	2	3	4	5	G. Effective school board procedures and structure.	1	2	3	4	5	
1	2	3	4	5	H. Opportunities for open communication between staff and administration.	1	2	3	4	5	

For each item the average importance and effectiveness scores were calculated, and the difference between these two was calculated. Table 1 shows these means for elementary teachers on the first section of the questionnaire. Note that ranks for importance, effectiveness and discrepancy were calculated for each item, and that the items were ranked by importance. We arbitrarily chose a level of 4.0 or higher to denote high importance, and a discrepancy of 1.0 to indicate a noteworthy need. Priority items, using our criteria must have both an importance of at least 4.0 and a discrepancy of at least 1.0. Six of the eight items in this section are priority items, using these arbitrary criteria.

The pattern of results was similar for both elementary and secondary teachers; there were very few priority items in the area of Facilities, equipment, materials, etc.; and many in the areas of Personnel and legal issues, and Administrative services. The greatest discrepancies also occurred for those items in the area of Personnel and legal issues.

Administrator Survey

The administrator survey was designed to examine the importance and the quality of delivery of various Wisconsin DPI services and activities. The services and activities had been identified by examining mission statements for the various divisions within the DPI, the DPI budget (which listed programs and goals), and by interviewing selected personnel within the DPI. The resulting survey items were grouped by the six major DPI program areas in the budget: General Educatonal Services, Services for the Educationally Disadvantaged, Services for the Handicapped, State Financial

TABLE 1

SELECTED ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES AS RATED BY ELEMENTARY TEACHERS AS TO THEIR IMPORTANCE AND HOW EFFECTIVELY THEY WERE PROVIDED IN THEIR LOCAL DISTRICT

ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES	IMPORTANCE AVERAGE	IMPORTANCE RANK	EFFECTIVENESS AVERAGE	EFFECTIVENESS RANK	DISCREPANCY AVERAGE	DISCREPANCY RANK
Opportunities for open communication between staff and administration.	4.65	1	3.25	2	1.40	2
Leadership, direction, support, unification of effort, and initiative in new programs.	4.56	2	3.13	5	1.43	1
Involvement of teachers and other staff in policy development and revision.	4.39	3	3.17	4	1.22	6
Effective school board procedures and structure.	4.25	4	2.91	6.5	1.34	3
Supervision and evaluation of instruction with prompt feedback.	4.17	5	2.91	6.5	1.26	5
Well planned assignment of staff members to different jobs and tasks.	4.16	6	3.21	3	0.95	7
Consultation about instructional methods and techniques.	4.14	7	2.83	8	1.31	4
Careful planning of the annual calendar and of the school's daily schedule.	4.05	8	3.47	1	0.58	8

Aids, Services for LEA Administration and Food Service, and Technical Support Services to Districts. For each item describing a service or activity, the respondent rated his/her perception of its importance on a five-point scale, and indicated whether or not his/her district had received that service/activity in the past two years. If, and only if, they had received that service/activity, the respondent rated, on a five-point scale, how well it had been performed. A photo-reduced copy of the first page of the questionnaire is shown in Figure 3.

The respondents to this questionnaire were district administrators, school board presidents, elementary and secondary principals, and CESA coordinators. With the exception of CESA Coordinators, (who all received the questionnaires), the respondents were selected using the sampling approaches described earlier.

Responses were analyzed by respondent group. Items within each general service area were ranked on the basis of the percent of respondents rating the item as having high or very high importance. Then the percent of respondents who indicated that their district had received the service within the past two years was calculated. Finally, the last calculation was the percent <u>of those receiving the service</u> who rated its quality as good or very good.

Time and space limitations prevent the presentation of a detailed analysis of the results from each respondent group in this report. We examined the degree of agreement of the responses across the various respondent groups, and found that the ratings of the relative importance of items by district administrators, secondary principals, and school board presidents were fairly similar for at least five out of the six sections of the questionnaire.

STATEWIDE ASSESSMENT OF EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

Directions:

All services and activities listed are currently provided by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI). If you are uncertain about an activity or whether it was received by your district, leave the item blank.

GENERAL EDUCATIONAL SERVICES	How IMPORTANT is this DPI activity? Circle the appropriate number. LEVEL OF IMPORTANCE					If your district received this service within the PAST 2 YEARS, circle YES and rate QUALITY. Otherwise, circle NO and do not rate QUALITY.					
	Very Low	Low	Med.	High	Very High	RECEIVED IN PAST 2 YEARS?	QUALITY OF ACTIVITY: Very Poor	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good
1. Provide information in various curriculum areas on instructional methods, new developments, instructional materials, standards of competency, etc.	1	2	3	4	5	YES NO	1	2	3	4	5
2. Provide consultant services on general instructional topics, such as classroom organization, scheduling, and discipline.	1	2	3	4	5	YES NO	1	2	3	4	5
3. Provide assistance in choosing educational objectives and translating educational objectives into learning activities.	1	2	3	4	5	YES NO	1	2	3	4	5
4. Monitor district compliance with the 13 standards.	1	2	3	4	5	YES NO	1	2	3	4	5
5. Assist districts in developing programs and/or services which meet the spirit and intent of the 13 standards.	1	2	3	4	5	YES NO	1	2	3	4	5
6. Provide consultation on pupil services (i.e. counseling and guidance, health, nursing, psychology, social work, etc.).	1	2	3	4	5	YES NO	1	2	3	4	5
7. Provide information and inservice training to districts on career education, vocational education, and manpower development.	1	2	3	4	5	YES NO	1	2	3	4	5
8. Provide leadership and assistance to schools in organizing and developing programs on career education, vocational education, and manpower development.	1	2	3	4	5	YES NO	1	2	3	4	5

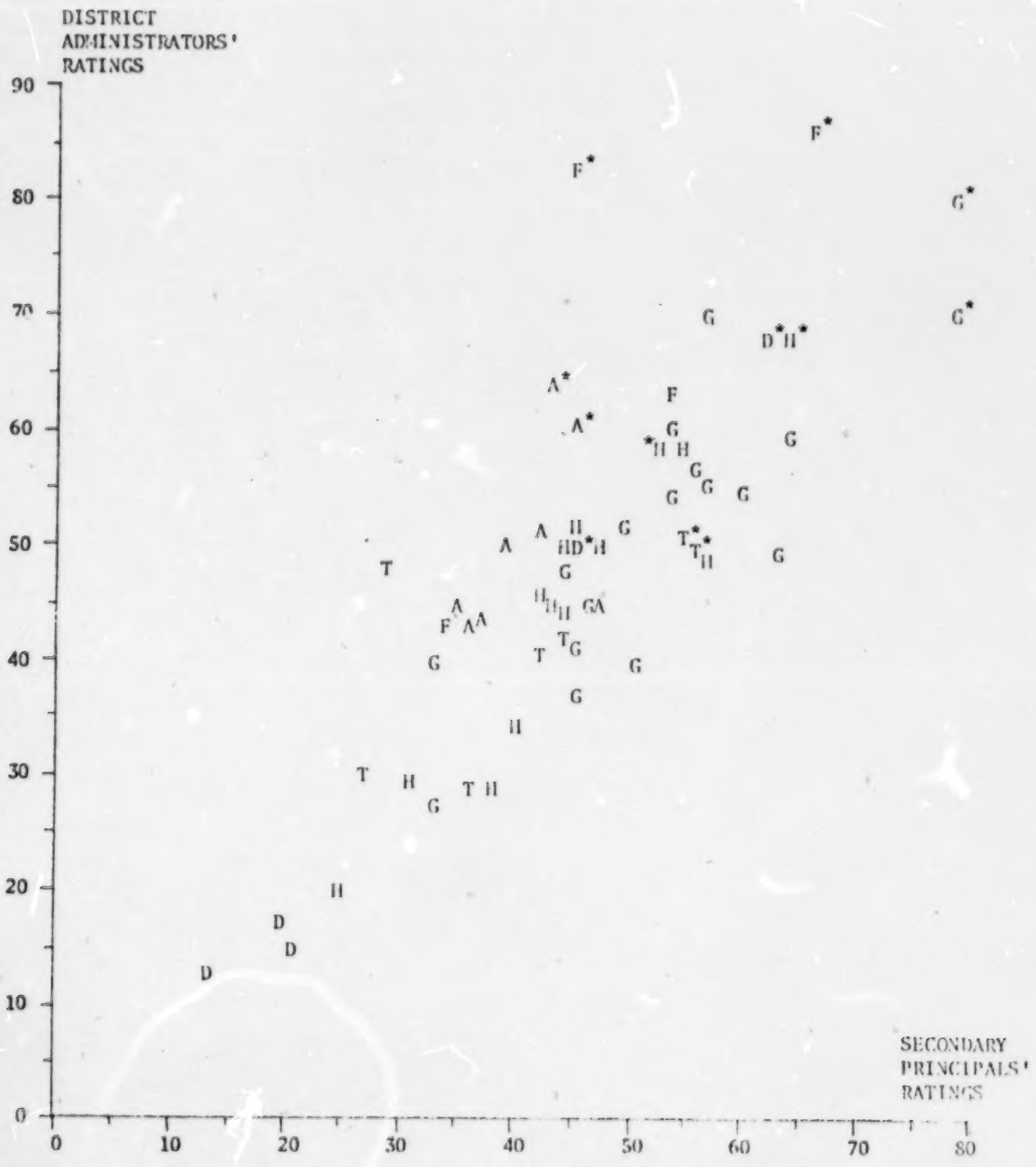
Figure 3: FIRST PAGE OF ADMINISTRATOR QUESTIONNAIRE

A scatter-gram showing the agreement of item importance ratings by district administrators and secondary principals is displayed in Figure 4. Importance, on this figure, is the percent of respondents who rated the item as of high or very high importance. The letters indicate the questionnaire section in which the item occurred.

Responses from district administrators (who had one of the highest questionnaire return rates) will be used to highlight some of our findings. The percent of administrators rating an activity/service as of high or very high importance ranged from 86 to 13%. It should be noted that some of DPI's activities are mandated by state and federal governments and must be done regardless of their popularity in LEAs. We will draw the screen of charity at this point and not reveal the identify of any program which received low ratings of importance.

Recall that the questionnaire had six sections or program areas. The top two items in importance from each of these six sections were skimmed off and ranked amongst themselves on importance. Table 2 shows the twelve items thus identified and the percent of administrators rating each as important or as very important. District administrator (i.e. superintendent) satisfaction with the manner in which the Wisconsin DPI has been performing these twelve activities/services typically ranged from good to very good. Of those who had received the activity/service in the past two years, a high of 90% and a low of 58% rated the quality of delivery of these 12 items as good or very good, with a median of 73%.

Figure 4: BIVARIATE DISTRIBUTION OF DPI SERVICE AND ACTIVITY IMPORTANCE AS RATED BY DISTRICT ADMINISTRATORS AND SECONDARY PRINCIPALS



Referring again to Figure 4, the top two items in each of the six questionnaire sections are starred. The reader can see that items in some of the sections were typically rated lower in importance than those of other sections. Thus, if the 56 items had been combined without respect to program areas, the top twelve items would have been different from those presented in Table 2.

The administrator survey also included an open-ended question at the end of each of the six sections which asked if there were any important unmet needs in that general program/service area. About one-fourth of the administrators responded to these questions, and few of the responses were statements about new needs. Rather, they tended to be reinforcement or reaffirmation of the importance of activities or services they had already rated.

In general, drawing conclusions from data gathered by the administrator survey has proved very difficult to date. It is especially difficult to put conclusions into a report that will be used by DPI administrators and yet not go beyond the data.

Uses of SWAN Data

As indicated in the introduction, it was intended that the SWAN study should provide information that could be used for state-level planning. The knowledge about public opinion could assist in planning ways of informing the public, or in supporting DPI arguments as to the importance of its roles and responsibilities during the formulation of its biennial

TABLE 2

TWO MOST IMPORTANT DPI ACTIVITIES IN EACH OF SIX GENERAL SERVICE AREAS, AS RATED BY DISTRICT ADMINISTRATORS

SERVICE OR ACTIVITY	Percent Rating Importance as High or Very High	Rank
Distribute state funds for all types of aids, to include the gathering and reporting of financial information	85.5%	1
Provide financial consultation to school districts	83.3	2
Provide information in various curriculum areas on instructional methods, new developments, instructional materials, standards of competency, etc.	80.0	3
Consult with districts on questions and problems related to the certification of teachers	70.1	4
Administer Title I ESEA funds for the educationally deprived, to include the identification of qualifying agencies, the process of documentation and the evaluation of current programs	67.9	5
Provide consultant services to districts in existing programs for the mentally, emotionally or learning disabled children	67.8	6
Provide technical consultant services related to school construction, facilities operation, and energy conservation	64.2	7
Supervise and administer child nutrition programs, including contracting, funding, and food assistance, e.g., National School Lunch Program, Special Milk Program, School Breakfast Program, Donated Food Program, Child Care Food Program, and Summer Food Service Program for Children	60.9	8
Assist districts and CESAs in planning, implementing and evaluating new programs for physically and mentally impaired children	59.3	9
Assist districts to conduct assessments of educational needs throughout the district	51.2	10
Provide consultant services to assist districts in identifying educationally deprived students and developing local programs	49.9	11
Distribute technical and informative publications from various sections within the DPI to public schools	49.5	12

budget and in related legislative hearings. The public's endorsement of the various education goals could be used to counter the simplistic aspects of the cry of "back to the basics." The findings about teacher needs statewide could be used to alert local administrators to potential teacher concerns in their own districts, and also for planning more detailed examinations of issues and options associated with the various identified needs. The administrator survey was intended to assist in an examination of the various activities and services the DPI provided for local districts and CESAs. It was hoped that activities that were important to local districts but not being performed as well as desired could be spotted, and that the need for new or different activities/services could be identified.

The administrator survey was also intended to be of special use to the private consultant firm that conducted the internal evaluation of the DPI. Indeed, it was intended that data from all of the surveys would be processed and available to those consultants. The project timeline required that the questionnaires discussed in this report be in the field before the contract for this internal evaluation was awarded. Copies of the questionnaires were given to each contractor expressing a serious interest in responding to the RFP. However, the contractor who actually conducted the internal management study found some mismatches between their approach to describing DPI activities and services and ours. The data proved to be of considerable use to them, however, dispite the mismatch.

It was intended that the SWAN data be useful for planning purposes within the DPI. How useful it will be, ultimately, still remains to be seen. Its usefulness will depend in part on the willingness of division

administrators and bureau directors to examine the data in detail. They may not be motivated to do this because they were not intimately involved in planning and executing the study.

Because the study examined the whole range of DPI activities, it did not focus on any one program with sufficient detail that it could provide much information viewed as immediately useful to the various program administrators. However, it was assumed that when people within the DPI saw the actual questions and results, they would relate them to their own specialty areas far better than we could, so various methods of getting the information to them were used. Tabulations of the data were distributed, as soon as they were available, to DPI's division administrators. After the types of analyses described in this paper, such as rank ordering, had been completed (and several alternative methods of analysis had been explored and abandoned), the tables showing these rankings, etc., were distributed to the division administrators and discussed briefly with them during one of their monthly administrative council meetings which they all attend.

Later, we conducted two meetings for DPI staff in general during which findings from the opinion poll and the teacher survey were presented. These meetings were poorly attended (less than 10% of the DPI employees attended), but those who did attend, including one division administrator, were positive, expressed interest in the data, and related it to their specialties.

It is our hope that, once the final technical reports for each component are completed and distributed, the data will fulfill the original purposes of the study.

TABLE 3

SWAN PROJECT RESPONSE RATES

SURVEY GROUP	NUMBER SELECTED	NUMBER WHO RESPONDED	RESPONSE RATE
CITIZENS			
CITIZENS	562	444	79%
TEACHERS			
ELEMENTARY	415	319	77%
SECONDARY	382	286	75%
ADMINISTRATORS			
SUPERINTENDENTS	190	155	82%
PRINCIPALS, ELEM.	208	156	75%
PRINCIPALS, SEC.	191	151	79%
SCH. BOARD PRES.	189	82	43%
CESA COORD'ERS	19	18	95%
TOTAL	2,156	1,611	75%